

Wycombe heroes rock the stars

Wycombe 0 Middlesbrough 0: by DENIS COMPTON

THIS was nearly one of the great upsets in the history of the F.A. Cup. Had justice prevailed, the fantastic little amateur Wycombe would have gone through to the fourth round at the first hurdle for a home tie against Sunderland.

They were faster on the ball and, in the second-half, almost

outplayed the professionals.

Middlesbrough manager Jack Charlton said afterwards: "I've never been on the back so much in my life. The relief after it was all over was almost unbearable. We found the sloping pitch impossible to play football on."

Yet Wycombe managed to do so—and how. They were all heroes. Their stamina was remarkable and their work-rate much higher than the Northern side.

One of the heroes, Terry Reardon, had to miss training on Thursday evening because he was working until midnight. A pipe-fitter, he also had to work yesterday morning. So did Tony Horseman, a machinist with a furniture company. Both played with tremendous zest for 90 minutes.

Middlesbrough failed miserably to overcome the notorious slope and adjust their play to its subtleties.

We all thought the referee blew the final whistle three minutes short of time, and when after the game, this was mentioned to Jacky Charlton he immediately replied: "Thank God for that."

It must have been 90 minutes of agonising tension for Jack sitting on the sideline, and seeing his team being pressurised by a superior side on the day for most of this match. I cannot recall one single dangerous shot from the Middlesbrough side to test goalkeeper John Maskell.

Gasps of relief from Charlton

By RICHARD YALLOP: Wycombe Wand 0, Middlesbro 0

Jack Charlton said in mid-week that he was worried about playing Wycombe on their ground, but he never dreamed he would be that worried. As the second half progressed and Middlesbrough rarely moved the ball out of their own half and were conceding free-kicks and corners galore, Charlton admitted to constantly asking how much longer there was to go. Every time he heard the answer he thought: "It's no good, we'll never make it." But they did, and he said he was delighted to slip away with an undeserved draw.

The discipline he has introduced into his side stood them in good stead. Middlesbrough were under constant pressure for all but the first quarter hour, and had his defence not played so well, and had not Souness not played so composedly, they would certainly not have the reprieve of a replay. It was not a match of great skill, as both the slope of the Loakes Park pitch and its smallness meant that no player had time or space to try anything ambitious, which worked particularly to the detriment of Middlesbrough. But it was one that had the spectators totally absorbed, and the wives in the stand gasping and screaming as if they were watching Roger Taylor contest the men's singles final at Wimbledon.

The character Wycombe's manager, Brian Lee, has instilled into his side was obvious from the start. Then Wycombe were pressed back in their own half, but they kept their heads, gradually took control, concentrated on doing the simple things well, and worked and worked.

Wycombe created several chances and all they lacked was a sharp finisher. The best opportunities fell after the interval when they were playing down the slope. From a cross by Holifield, who showed great skill all afternoon, Perrin stuck a foot out and the ball slipped just past. Then Reardon floated a free kick across goal and Phillips, in one of those rehearsed "Big Match" set pieces, headed inches wide.

It was a match when both defences stood out and they had to cope with some awkward up-and-unders hastily booted from the opposite end. Wycombe's back line of Birdseye, Mead, Phillips and Hand did a fine job and Mead handled the classy Mills with great authority. Maskell, the goalkeeper, had only one bobbing 30-yarder from Foggon to deal with and he said he was a bit disappointed by the game. "I thought it was going to be a goalkeeper's dream, you know, a whole string of flying saves," Ayresome Park, on Tuesday, might live up to his expectations.

Wycombe Wanderers.—Maskell; Birdseye, Mead, Phillips, Hand, Kennedy, Reardon, Holifield, Perrin, Searle, Horseman (Evans 88min.).

Middlesbrough.—Platt; Craggs, Boam, Maddren, Spraggon, Brine, Souness, Armstrong, Hickton, Mills, Foggon (Willey 80min.).

Referee.—A. Porter (Bolton).

TORMENTED

But the amateurs tormented the Northerners. Middlesbrough defenders Willy Maddren and Stuart Boam in particular were merely content to kick the ball anywhere to relieve the pressures.

In the second half, a tremendous header from Wycombe's Phillips, after a free kick from Perrins, flashed inches wide of a post with goalkeeper Jim Platt helpless. Then a beautiful movement down the left ended with a terrific shot from Tony Horseman missing the goal by a whisker.

WYCOMBE.—Maskell; Birdseye, Hand, Mead, Phillips, Reardon, Kennedy, Holifield, Searle, Horseman, Perrin. Sub: Evans.

MIDDLESBROUGH.—Platt; Craggs, Maddren, Boam, Spraggon, Brine, Souness, Armstrong, Hickton, Mills, Foggon. Sub: Willey.